

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**Strategic Leadership Assessment of Colin L. Powell**

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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## ABSTRACT

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This SRP analyzes the strategic leadership competencies of General (Ret) Colin Powell as they emerged throughout his distinguished career through his current service as Secretary of State. The Strategic Leadership PRIMER and U.S. Army FM 22-100, Army Leadership, provide frames of reference. The senior leader competencies of Gen (Ret) Powell's youth, early and middle years through his position as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reveal his development as a leader. His fully developed competencies become increasingly evident in his performance as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State.



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## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT OF COLIN POWELL

### **INTRODUCTION**

The first block of U.S. War College instruction appropriately focuses on Strategic Leadership. This core course lays the foundation for instruction throughout the academic year. In many of the core courses, leadership is analyzed and studied so students may benefit from learning about achievements and mistakes of great leaders. A clear understanding of current Army doctrine and philosophical perspectives on historical examples provide worthwhile insights into the acquisition of senior leader capabilities.

The Strategic Leadership Primer and FM 22-100, Army Leadership, clearly define strategic leadership. These two documents are used as the touchstone for this study. They offer a greater understanding of leadership at the highest levels.<sup>1</sup> Both definitions emphasize that in order to establish and maintain a historical perspective, senior leaders must read, study and analyze history. A working knowledge and understanding of history gives them insights into current affairs. This knowledge and understanding enable senior leaders to prepare the Army for the future, and to lead the Army effectively into the future. They influence the entire organization by providing purpose, direction, and motivation as they accomplish current missions, both foreign and domestic. Finally, they improve the institution by ensuring that its people are trained and that its equipment and organizations are ready for tomorrow's missions.<sup>2</sup>

This paper analyzes the strategic leadership of a contemporary soldier-statesman, General (Ret) Colin Powell. It describes his strategic leader competencies as a military leader and as a statesman. The thesis of this study is that General (Ret) Colin L. Powell is a great example of a strategic leader.

### **FRAMEWORK/STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES**

Current strategic leadership doctrine, set forth in Army Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership, defines strategic leaders as the Army's highest-level thinkers, war-fighters, and political-military experts.<sup>3</sup> It further states that strategic leaders possess certain interpersonal, conceptual, and technical skills and competencies. These capabilities enable strategic leaders to perform effectively at the strategic level. Strategic leaders are challenged to sustain the Army's culture, while also trying to offer a compelling vision of the future, convey their vision to a wide audience, and personally lead and influence change.<sup>4</sup> The environment in which a strategic leader operates is characterized by extreme uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, and volatility. Finally, strategic leaders have demonstrated expertise in their own domain of war-

fighting while managing large organizations, but they also are very adept in the political environments of the nation's decision-makers.<sup>5</sup>

Strategic leaders' interpersonal skills include: the ability to communicate both internally and externally, strong negotiating skills, and the ability to build consensus and recruit competent staffs.<sup>6</sup> Colin Powell exhibited such skills even as an Reserve Officers Training Corps cadet at City College of New York.<sup>7</sup> He continued to hone his interpersonal skills as a liaison officer in Vietnam, a Brigade Commander in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne/Air Assault Division, and as the Chairman Joint Chiefs.<sup>8</sup>

Strategic leaders' conceptual skills include the ability to constantly and consistently deal with diversity, ambiguity, complexity, change, and conflicting policies.<sup>9</sup> In this foggy environment, they develop well-reasoned positions and provide worthwhile advice to the highest leaders in our nation, both in the military and civilian community. A review of Powell's accomplishments leads one to believe he was a master at using his conceptual skills as the National Security Advisor during the Reagan administration, as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the first Bush administration and now as the Secretary of State in the current Bush administration. An excellent example of this competency occurred when Colin Powell, former President Jimmy Carter, and Senator Sam Nunn went to Haiti in 1994 to negotiate with Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras. They were able to persuade Cedras to hand over power in an uncertain and ambiguous environment. Even though there was no direct evidence of the part Powell personally played, it appears that this was another example of his conceptual abilities.

Strategic leader's technical skills include an understanding of organizational systems, a firm understanding of functional relationships outside the organization, and knowledge of the political and social systems in which the organization operates.<sup>10</sup> In *The Development of the Base Force, 1989-1992*, Lorna S. Jaffee cites an example of General Powell's technical competencies:

When General Powell became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he was determined to reshape national military strategy and the Armed Forces to meet the new environment. When he was the National Security Advisor he found that the product the military produced seldom did not meet the policy maker's needs. He believed that, as a result of Goldwater-Nichols reform, it was his responsibility to initiate change in strategy, and he did not wish to be accused of not responding to world events.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, General Powell seized the strategic moment using his technical competencies (leveraging technology to obtain advantage, understanding joint and combined relationships) to translate political goals into military objectives.

## **BACKGROUND/EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

Colin Luther Powell was born on April 5, 1937 in Harlem, New York. His mother and father immigrated to the United States in 1920 from Jamaica. His family played a significant role in the development of his character, values, morals, and system of beliefs. He learned early in life the importance of setting goals, self-sufficiency, and striving to always do your best. At an early age he demonstrated leadership attributes that exhibited both his developing conceptual skills and his values. These skills and values serve him through present day.

The dominant figure in his life was his father, Luther Theophilus Powell, a jaunty, confident man.<sup>12</sup> Colin Powell's wife, Alma, believed Powell is much like his father in how he treats people,<sup>13</sup> his work ethic, and drive to excel. In elementary school Colin Powell was considered a slow learner. Growing up in Harlem in the 1940s and/50s, Colin Powell loved street games, running the neighborhood, going to movies, collecting stamps, making maps, and reading.<sup>14</sup> His parents always provided plenty of books around the house. He also played several sports and tried to play several musical instruments, but he always gave them up for one reason or another. In his biography, My American Journey, he recalls that "his inability to stick to anything became a source of concern to my parents, unspoken, but I knew it was there."<sup>15</sup> Yet, one thing remained constant - his strong work ethic in his part time jobs.

In high school he did not distinguish himself with high grades, but he met standards to graduate after three-and-a-half years.<sup>16</sup> In 1954 he entered college at City College of New York. In a biography of him by David Roth, Sacred Honor, Powell admits he went to college for one reason, primarily that his parents expected it.<sup>17</sup> He tolerated college, earning a "B" average in Engineering during his first semester. At the end of his first semester he decided to change his major to geology, mainly because he was not particularly gifted in physics, calculus, history, or languages.<sup>18</sup> One day near campus, he saw some college students in uniform; they were members of the Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC). He had always had an interest in the military and an attraction to the uniform. In the fall of 1954, he signed up for ROTC. In his biography, Colin Powell recalls that, "...The uniform gave me a sense of belonging, and something I had never experienced all the while I was growing up; I felt distinctive."<sup>19</sup> His sister Marilyn recalls "that in a new way it gave him what he sought and was accustomed to-- discipline. I think he liked the fact that it was structured, since he came from a family with rules

and order.”<sup>20</sup> In the ROTC program Powell’s natural leadership ability blossomed. He maintained a “C” average in his major but excelled with A’s in all ROTC classes. In addition to the required ROTC classes, he joined the Pershing Rifles drill team. He later became company commander of the team. In his second year an upper classman, Ronnie Brooks, became his mentor and taught Colin Powell how to lead by example.<sup>21</sup> Later, he became a cadet battalion commander. He recalls that, “As a battalion commander I learned consensus building and decision-making.” He saw this as a defining moment: For the first time, he realized he might be able to influence the outcome of events.<sup>22</sup> In his senior year he became cadet Colonel of the ROTC program at CCNY. He recalls in his biography that some of the decisions he had to make were just as significant as a cadet in ROTC as they were as four-star general in the Pentagon.<sup>23</sup> “He learned that being in charge means making decisions, no matter how unpleasant. If it’s broke, fix it. When you do, you win the gratitude of the people who have been suffering under the bad situation.”<sup>24</sup>

In June of 1958 he graduated CCNY as a Distinguished Military Graduate and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry. He still appreciates his CCNY experiences: “I believe that City College gave me a strong and valuable education. It provided me with an appreciation of the liberal arts; it gave me an insight into the fundamentals of government; it gave me a deep respect for our democratic system.”<sup>25</sup>

He did credit much of his success in school and in how he was raised to his parents. “It was nothing they ever said that taught me, it was the way they lived their lives. I had been shaped not by preaching, but by example, by moral osmosis--all provided an enviable send-off on life’s journey.”<sup>26</sup>

## EARLY MILITARY DEVELOPMENT

In his formative years as an Army officer, Powell built on the past experiences of his youth, his ROTC years, and his initial assignments in the Army. He developed greater competencies, met challenge to his values, and acquired the warrior ethos. He learned more lessons of leadership; he made painful decisions; he learned how to cooperate with peers and subordinates; he learned that actions had real consequences; and he developed the consequences of his actions, the stamina to deal with ambiguity, stress and complexity.<sup>27</sup>

For years, I have told young officers that most of what I know about military I learned in my first eight weeks at Fort Benning. Three key areas stood out in his training: the mission is primary, followed by taking care of soldiers; don’t stand there, do something; and lead by example.<sup>28</sup>

After graduation from the Infantry Officer Basic course, jump school, and ranger school, Colin Powell was assigned to the Fulda Gap in Germany.

During his first assignment in Germany, he held a myriad of assignments: platoon leader, company executive officer, several battalion staff assignments, and company command (twice) as a senior lieutenant. Like many of the assignments in his career, his commands were after less than six months in duration. His superiors would see something in the young Powell and assign him a position normally held by officers of more senior rank. In his initial assignment, Colin Powell says "...He learned how to think originally, assimilate large amounts of information, and communicates intelligibly, even persuasively."<sup>29</sup> As a lieutenant, he also learned some important leadership qualities that he admits have stayed with him to this day. His battalion commanders taught him how to treat soldiers humanely while not always following the book.<sup>30</sup> He was also described as tough and as one who never gave up. In his last OER as a first lieutenant, he was described as "...a lieutenant who was tenacious, yet polished, and able to deal with individuals of any rank."<sup>31</sup>

On 1 June 1962 Colin Powell was promoted to Captain. Two months later he was ordered to Vietnam. Once in country, he reported to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division to serve as an advisor, where his mission was to help build leadership and unit cohesion between the Vietnamese.<sup>32</sup> His superiors would soon learn that he was well prepared for this position even though he was a junior Captain. Powell spent most of his time on patrol, in jungles, swamps, climbing mountains with the Montagnards. As an advisor, he called upon his interpersonal, conceptual, and technical skills. He was physically fit, mentally tough, a proven leader in tactics, yet by nature he was diplomatic and culturally sensitive.<sup>33</sup> In August, with less than four months in country, Colin Powell was transferred to Army of the Republic of Vietnam, First Division Headquarters as an advisor on the general staff, responsible for improving training throughout the division.<sup>34</sup> Until November 1963, when he returned to the United States, Colin Powell would remain at division headquarters, where he improved readiness throughout the division.

When he returned to the United States, he was assigned back to Fort Benning to serve on the U.S. Army Infantry Board. Then he attended the Infantry Officer's Advanced Course for nine months. In school in shared his broad experience in Vietnam and his staff experiences. His Infantry Officer's Advanced Course peers recall him as a hard working team player interested in more than his own success, attentive, and a good listener. He inspired confidence in his fellow classmates.<sup>35</sup> He finished in the top ten percent of his class. In May 1966, while teaching at the Infantry School, Colin Powell was promoted early to major, with less than four years as a

captain and eight years in service. Colin Powell was next assigned to Command and General Staff College. Here he would study subjects that would prepare him for the next phase of his career, namely that of a battalion executive officer and battalion commander. This curriculum first exposed him to incorporating National Security Policy into operational designs. In June 1968, he graduated second out of a class of 1,244.<sup>36</sup> At this point, Colin Powell wanted to attend graduate school. But Vietnam beckoned.

In June 1968, Colin Powell arrived in Vietnam as a major and was assigned as a battalion executive officer in the 3d Battalion, First Infantry Division. Over the next several months he gained a reputation as an unusually well-qualified officer with great potential. He was gifted with a unique ability to rapidly sift through voluminous information, extract and analyze pertinent data, and reach a sound decision.<sup>37</sup> In this position, his reputation attracted attention of division headquarters. The Commanding General then found out that he had graduated second in his class at CGSC. He was quickly pulled up to division headquarters to become the G-3 as a Major. With only 14 months in grade, he was placed in a senior lieutenant colonel position. What had become a trend in his career once again occurred--after three months in Vietnam he had moved into a position of higher responsibility. The Commanding General, Major General Gettys, recalls his recognition of Powell's capabilities: I've got the number two Leavenworth graduate in my division and he's stuck out in the boonies as a battalion exec? Bring him up here. I want him as my plans officer.<sup>38</sup>

He stayed in this position for several months until a former battalion commander replaced him. In the G-3, position he earned a reputation as a great briefer and planner. He also received the Soldier's Medal for heroism during a helicopter crash; he saved the lives of several soldiers including the Commanding General. His performance was described at his award ceremony as he departed Vietnam in July 1969:

Serving as the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, and Deputy G-3, he worked arduous extra-duty hours seven days a week, under intense mental pressure, and frequent exposure to hostile fire while visiting troops, commanders and staffs of subordinate units. He always maintained a calm attitude, never reflecting the strain of his great responsibilities. The briefings he conducted for commanders and visiting dignitaries were outstanding. He was instrumental in developing detailed plans and implementing operations which were highly detailed and complex because of the size of this division, the largest division in the United States Army.<sup>39</sup>

Many of the planned operations involved other U.S. services and ARVN units. He left Vietnam in the summer of 1969. His next assignment would take him to graduate school at George Washington University, less than two months after leaving Vietnam.

During the first ten years of his career, Powell refined the skills gained from each experience and applied them in positions of greater responsibility. In these early years he learned how to deal with higher leaders as he handled many crises. In many of his assignments, he had to deal with much uncertainty and ambiguity. In my opinion, these early years were filled with defining moments that would set the course for both his career and the rest of his life. Faced with many challenges to overcome, Powell gained confidence, and incorporated lessons learned from these experiences that would follow him for many years to come.<sup>40</sup> As indicated many times by his superiors and peers alike, Colin Powell exhibited a strong work ethic.<sup>41</sup> He also benefited from superior mentoring at all levels until he served as CJCS.<sup>42</sup> Other competencies were evident. He was a great communicator, a skilled negotiator with the ARVN, and a master at building consensus within his staff and higher headquarters.<sup>43</sup> A review of the literature exhibits those conceptual and technical skills were developed in these early years.

## MIDDLE YEARS

During his middle years, Colin Powell attended graduate school at George Washington University, served as a battalion commander for twelve months in the Republic of Korea, had a short nine month tour in the Pentagon, served in the White House under the Fellowship program, was a student at the National War College and Brigade Commander in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne (Air Assault) Division. Several points are worth mentioning at this point in regard to his strategic leadership development. His strategic leadership foundation strengthened as he continued to develop his competencies.

After graduate school he served on the Pentagon staff of General DePuy, who observed him for several weeks before assigning him to writing speeches. Then one day in early 1972, as the Vietnam war began to decline and troop strength was beginning to dwindle, General DePuy gave him an assignment: "Powell, I want you to take a couple of bright guys, go off into a corner, and start thinking the unthinkable. I want you to figure out how we would structure a five-hundred-thousand man army."<sup>44</sup> This was Colin Powell's first official strategic task. He went off with a colleague and designed a rock bottom force called "Base Force."<sup>45</sup>

After this mind stretching project for DePuy, his career branch called on him to fill out the paperwork for a White House Fellowship position. When Colin Powell told the assignments branch Major he was not interested, the Major made it clear that Infantry Branch was not asking

him, it was ordering him.<sup>46</sup> A couple months later Colin Powell was assigned to the White House, Office of Management and Budget. He worked under Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger for a short time and worked with Frank Carlucci. Both would later become mentors. The White House Fellow program exposed Colin Powell to many areas of government and the world that few officers are ever exposed to. Fellows directly witnessed the workings of the executive branch, studied the legislative branch, and observed enactment of social programs. In the foreign arena, fellows met with leaders from Japan, the Soviet Union, China, Poland, Bulgaria and West Germany.<sup>47</sup> The fellows also met such American journalists as Eric Sevareid, Dan Rather, Hugh Sidey and others. Colin Powell recalls that the program's intent:

...was to let us inside the engine room to see the cogs and gears of government grinding away and also to take us up high for the panoramic view. In all the schools of political science, in all the courses in public administration throughout the country, there could be nothing comparable to this education. The people I had met during that year were going to shape my future in ways unimaginable to me then.<sup>48</sup>

The following year Powell was in Korea as a battalion commander in the 2d Infantry Division. Here he learned a unique brand of military leadership under Major General Hank Emerson. Colin Powell fondly recalls his year as a battalion commander: "I savor the intense camaraderie, the irrepressible characters, and the coltish high spirits."<sup>49</sup> In 1975 he returned to the states to attend the National War College. In this senior service environment, he would refine his strategic leader thinking and pursue relevant studies. He was also promoted to full colonel midway through the year and selected for brigade command at the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne (Air Assault) Division. He spent two years there under Major General Wicham's leadership, where he learned some new technologies. After brigade command, Colin Powell returned to the Pentagon to work in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. There he would serve as Executive to the Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. This assignment was the prototype for the positions he would fill, on again and off again, for the next eleven years that is, positions that would bring him finally into national limelight.<sup>50</sup> In a very real sense, he learned how military and political power merge. It was very nearly the last bit of education he would need. And as he was to prove in the years to come, he was the perfect student.<sup>51</sup> In this position he worked for Casper Weinberger, then Secretary of Defense, and Frank Carlucci, deputy secretary of state, and was promoted to Brigadier General.<sup>52</sup> His 1 June 1979 promotion made him the youngest general in the Army, at age forty-two.

In June, 1981, Powell left Washington for the first time in four years to become Assistant Division Commander of the Fourth Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Carson, Colorado.<sup>53</sup> This assignment enabled him to get promoted to Major General. Fourteen months later he moved to Fort Leavenworth to become the Deputy Commanding General of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Combat Development Activity. This command was known as the Army's think tank for new weapons, new tanks, and new vehicles.<sup>54</sup> The position of Deputy Commanding General also seems to have provided a capstone of sorts for a resume that now ran the gamut from combat experience to future planning, from the traditional side of military life to the more chaotic political side of being a thoroughly modern general.<sup>55</sup> Just over a year later, Colin Powell returned to Washington to become the military assistant to Caspar Weinberger.

## **SENIOR YEARS**

Colin Powell's years of academic growth, military experience, and service in Washington contributed immeasurably to his strong performances as a senior leader.<sup>56</sup> Truly, the boy is father to the man. In December 1987 Colin Powell formally assumed the position of National Security Advisor (NSA). With fewer than six months in the position of FORSCOM commander, he was called back to Washington to fill this critical position in the Bush Senior administration. He thus became the most powerful black person ever to serve in the executive branch of the United States government.<sup>57</sup> In this position as the NSA, he was involved in a myriad of activities, beginning with the first of three U.S.-U.S.S.R summits. He also oversaw seven summits that included Canada, Mexico, NATO, and an economic summit.<sup>58</sup>

During his two years as the NSA, he performed many services beyond those required of a uniformed officer. His daily routine dealt with constant decision making and then passing along recommendations on issues from setting up summits, free-trade agreement with Canada, to other areas such as economic and geo political issues.<sup>59</sup> Colin Powell spent much of his time as NSA coordinating the summit for the space-based Strategic Defense Initiative. Colin Powell was a master at coordinating meetings and achieving consensus. He also had a large impact on shaping policy. He actively and effectively participated in the interdepartmental process of national security policy formulation and execution. One of the most notable policies he helped shape dealt with reversing the race toward nuclear Armageddon.<sup>60</sup> He demonstrated the ability to advise the President on policy development, strategy, and resourcing issues.<sup>61</sup> As NSA, he provided a textbook example of effective senior leadership as well as a person who was a great communicator. The results from his achievements as the NSA validates that he was a master negotiator and consensus-builder. Additionally, he demonstrated that he was a pillar of reason

and good judgment in a foggy environment of uncertainty and ambiguity. He also enjoyed the total confidence of the nation's chief executive, the President of the U.S.

Colin Powell was designated Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 October 1989. He was the first black general officer to ever hold the position, and the youngest general in history to become the President's senior military advisor for the armed forces. He would become the first chairman to exercise the enhanced power and influence granted by Goldwater-Nichols legislation.

This was legislation passed by Congress in 1986 to strengthen the powers of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Colin Powell used these powers to the hilt, wielding power and influence beyond that exercised by any previous chairman.<sup>62</sup> As the CJCS, Powell's responsibility was to provide military counsel to the Secretary of Defense and the President.<sup>63</sup> It made him the principal military advisor to the President and gave him total control of all manpower represented by the Joint Staff. He was intimately familiar with how the cabinet and executive branch operates. In effect though Goldwater-Nichols had created its own imperative, the position as newly configured was almost custom fit for Powell.<sup>64</sup> As Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, Colin Powell called on his thirty-plus years of military experience and relied on his interpersonal, conceptual and technical competencies.

In addition to the conduct of his daily duties, three major events would consume the majority of his time as the CJCS. First, he would work with leaders across the services to plan and execute "Operation Just Cause." Second, he developed a strategy for the Gulf War, "Desert Shield/Storm." Third, he developed a strategic vision as part of the National Military Strategy for the U.S. military as it downsized following the Cold War.

In his daily duties, as CJCS he dealt with many leaders, to include the Service Chiefs, Secretary of Defense, Congress and the President. As CJCS, he had to ensure all parties had accurate, timely information on which to make decisions. The day after Colin Powell assumed the CJCS position he had to deal with his first problem, Panama. The failed coup attempt in Panama, threats on American lives and a murdered Marine lieutenant prompted President and CJCS to develop and execute "Operation Just Cause." In the process of planning for Operation Just Cause, Colin Powell relied on many of his competencies to interact with the media, the Service Chiefs, Congress and the President. The morning after Operation Just Cause began, the President and Colin Powell went on television to provide the American people with a broad overview of the military planning for Panama.

Less than eight months later, Powell found himself in a similar situation. This time the crisis was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. During the initial buildup of forces, Powell constantly

conveyed his vision/strategy through the media to the American people. He made frequent trips to Congress to communicate his vision and build consensus for his strategy. On a regular basis, he conferred with the President and advised him on a possible strategy. In these meetings with the President, Secretary of Defense and National Security Advisor, Colin Powell relied on all his interpersonal, conceptual, and technical skills to present the military position. In one of the last meetings with the President before war broke out, Colin Powell presented what he called the “Strangulation” strategy to defeat Iraq.<sup>65</sup> The policy fell short of advocating containment, but did present all the military options. In the end Colin Powell’s conscience was clear “...he had made his recommendations, and then he saluted.”<sup>66</sup> Powell did feel good about his decisions surrounding the planning and execution of the war. He constantly advised the President and Secretary of Defense, built consensus among the service chiefs, conducted daily conversations with General Schwarzkopf, and communicated his vision to the American people through the media.

As the only member of the inner circle to have spent ground time in Vietnam, Powell had more reason than any of the others to know the necessity of bringing Congress and the American people along for the ride-not only to assure that the President would be granted the power to make war but also to make certain that once the power was granted the prosecution of the war would be as free as possible of entangling politics.<sup>67</sup> When the war quickly ended in February 1991, the inner circle had agreed that objectives had been met and further hostilities were no longer necessary. Colin Powell had played a central role by precisely matching the coalition’s achievable political ends with specifically military means: defeat the Iraqi army and drive it out of Kuwait, do so swiftly and decisively with a minimum of allied casualties, and do so within the constraints of the U.N. resolutions.<sup>68</sup>

Colin Powell’s final task as chairman was to lead the post-war strategy of downsizing the U.S. military. In January 1991 as Operation Desert Shield developed into the offensive Desert Storm, Colin Powell was addressing congressional committees on the emerging and enduring realities of a new world order. He addressed strategic concepts, the kinds of forces needed to face the changing world, and the Base Force.<sup>69</sup> He envisioned major restructuring of US security policy, strategy, force posture and capabilities-all supported by the Base Force concept.<sup>70</sup> He recognized he would have to build consensus with the Administration, DOD, Congress, the Service Chiefs, and the American people. Through Pentagon press releases, public speaking engagements, interviews with media, and constant Congressional testimony, he emphasized central themes of his vision: need for a new US strategy of engagement, Base Force requirements, changes in world affairs, and a gradual downsized. In a speech at the

NATO Defense College in the fall of 1992, he predicated that the complexion of the American forces would be drastically different from those in the past, or even what we hoped for it in the past. He said, "I will tell you that in 1995 we will see a military force that is far, far smaller than you see it today, perhaps one-third smaller". His rationale was based on the changing landscape of the world.

Current U.S. Army War College students from all the NATO nations agree that Powell is an impressive, persuasive soldier/statesman.<sup>71</sup> In Sacred Honor, Powell admits the toughest part of shrinking the armed forces is not a strategic matter, but the human side of the equation. He knew the U.S. had to bring the force down numerically without breaking it.<sup>72</sup> No matter at what level he had led, Powell has first of all tried to take care of his soldiers. This has been a consistent theme for Powell, namely concern for the soldier. In this situation as the military downsized, he was concerned about losing some of the best men and women the services have ever seen.

## **SECRETARY OF STATE**

Colin Powell assumed the position of Secretary of State in January 2001. As outlined in the above text, he brought a broad range of experiences to this daunting task. Having worked for three Presidents and having spent seven years in the Washington circle, he knew how the system operated. He had demonstrated the attributes necessary to be an effective Secretary of State: strategic thinker, command presence, managerial acumen, and the ability to articulate his views and persuade members of Congress as well as allies.<sup>73</sup> But could he make the transition from soldier to statesman? Almost immediately Colin Powell began to galvanize a neglected and demoralized organization, the State Department. He filled many of his key assistant-secretary jobs, the people who oversee the six regions of the globe, with career Foreign Service officers, to whom he has delegated the kind of authority a Corp Commander gives his division commanders.<sup>74</sup>

Unlike past Secretaries, Colin Powell focused both on management problems and foreign policy. In a 22 January 2002 speech Powell declared, "I'm not just coming in to serve the foreign policy needs of the American people, I'm coming in as the leader and manager of this department."<sup>75</sup> In this same speech he shared a vision in simple and compelling terms to members of the State Department.<sup>76</sup> He has made it very clear that he is in charge of management within the State Department.

As part of his vision, he told State Department workers he was more interested in their leadership than management." Management is easy, whereas leaders must motivate people,

turn them on, squeeze 110 percent performance out of their shops, delegate authority while holding subordinates to account, dispense praise and trust in exchange for loyalty and hard work, and finally attend to morale.<sup>77</sup> This speech laid the groundwork for the State Department to function under their new leader.

Colin Powell's biggest task to date has been to set U.S. foreign policy. The Clinton Administration left U.S. foreign policy in a state of considerable disarray, which the Bush campaign vowed to rectify by developing the overarching strategic vision that was absent in the often-haphazard foreign policy of the past eight years.<sup>78</sup> In the nearly two years Colin Powell has been Secretary of State, he has applied many of the strategic leadership competencies outlined in FM 22-100 and the U.S. Army War College Strategic Leadership Primer. The competencies that he has called on the most are: consensus-building, envisioning, communicating, and dealing with ambiguity-but, most of all, negotiating. In the volatile, new world of American foreign policy over which Colin Powell presides, he uses his negotiating and consensus building skills to form alliances and resolve crises with foreign countries.

One of his first successes was the international crisis with China. Colin Powell's influence and negotiating skills brought a favorable end to the situation involving the collision of an EP-3 spy plane with a Chinese fighter. Over the past year he has made several attempts to defuse the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In late 2002, Colin Powell worked intensely to negotiate a compromise to lower tensions between India and Pakistan. To date he has worked hard to build a solid alliance to address the Gulf crisis and to resolve issues related to the on-going war on terrorism.

Colin Powell has quickly and confidently assumed the duties and obligations of a statesman. He successfully transitioned from soldier to statesman by calling on the same competencies and skills that made him a great military leader.

## **CONCLUSION**

This SRP has surveyed Colin Powell's life and career from birth through his current position as Secretary of State. Early in his life, he began developing the leadership competencies specified in FM 22-100, Army Leadership, and the U.S. Army War College Strategic Leadership Primer. One may ask preciously what made Colin Powell successful as a strategic leader. Or, what competencies made him so successful? Former USAWC Commandant, Major General Chilcoat offers some insight into the making of a Colin Powell: "Competencies are developed by the master of the strategic art during the course of a lifetime of education, service, and experience: The strategic leader provides vision and focus, capitalizes

on command and peer leadership skills, and inspires others to think and act.”<sup>79</sup> Colin Powell exhibited these qualities progressively throughout his career.

Surely many factors contributed to Colin Powell’s success as a strategic leader. First and foremost were his parental influence, especially the moral values his parents instilled in him early in his life. Powell himself credits most of his success to his parents: “It was nothing they ever said that taught me, it was the way they lived their lives. I had been shaped not by preaching, but by example, by moral osmosis-all provided an enviable send-off on life’s journey.”<sup>80</sup> His education at CCNY also provided him a solid foundation in liberal arts and government. He developed a strong work ethic as a youngster, which followed him throughout his career. In ROTC he developed strong leadership skills and love for the military. Throughout his military career, he refined his leadership style and honed the competency skill sets in each position. In ROTC he was fortunate to have a mentor that assisted in molding and shaping him. During his military career he was fortunate to serve a variety of mentors. These mentors recognized his potential and groomed him for positions of greater responsibility by preparing him to perform at the strategic level.

Finally, one factor is paramount throughout Colin Powell’s life: his ability to work with and communicate with people from all walks of life. As we consider all of Colin Powell’s achievements throughout his life, the scope of his competencies, and his contributions to the U.S. Army and this nation, we cannot help but regard him as one of our very best strategic leaders of this generation. He has always been receptive to new experiences; he has successfully dealt with constant change, never wavering in his values; no one has ever questioned his integrity. He could have easily “rest on his laurels.” Instead, he remains committed to the most challenging and demanding service to this nation.

WORD COUNT = 6,190

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Department of the Army, Army Leadership, Army Regulation 22-100 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 31 August 1999) 7-28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 7-1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 7-1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 7-1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 7-1.

<sup>7</sup> Roth, David, Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Harari, Oren; Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell, New York, McGraw Hill Companies, 2002. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Department of the Army, Army Leadership, Army Regulation 22-100 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 31 August 1999) 7-1.

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<sup>11</sup> Jaffee, Lorna S, The Development of the Base Force: 1989-1992, Document prepared by the Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., My American Journey, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 21

<sup>13</sup> Roth, David, Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., My American Journey, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>16</sup> Roth, David, Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 38.

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<sup>20</sup> Roth, David, *Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,40.

<sup>22</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., *My American Journey*, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 34.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.,35.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.,35.

<sup>25</sup> Roth, David, *Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 36.

<sup>26</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., *My American Journey*, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 37.

<sup>27</sup> Lindsey, Esther; Holmes, Virginia; and McCallister, M.W., *Key Events in Executive's Lives*, Technical Report No.32 (Greensboro: Center for Creative Research, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., *My American Journey*, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 41.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.,48

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,46.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.,48.

<sup>32</sup> Roth, David, *Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 64.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,66.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.,69.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,76.

<sup>36</sup> Means, Howard; *Colin Powell/Soldier Statesman, Statesman Soldier*, New York; Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992. 140.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.,147.

<sup>38</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., *My American Journey*, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 135.

<sup>39</sup> Means, Howard; Colin Powell/Soldier Statesman, Statesman Soldier, New York; Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992. 152.

<sup>40</sup> Harari, Oren; Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell, New York, McGraw Hill Companies, 2002. 6.

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<sup>42</sup> Harari, Oren; Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell, New York, McGraw Hill Companies, 2002. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Roth, David, Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 66.

<sup>44</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., My American Journey, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 157.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.,157.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.,161.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.,176.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.,203.

<sup>50</sup> Means, Howard; Colin Powell/Soldier Statesman, Statesman Soldier, New York; Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992. 191.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.,190.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.,191

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.,201.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.,202.

<sup>56</sup> Roth, David, Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 114-115.

<sup>57</sup> Means, Howard; Colin Powell/Soldier Statesman, Statesman Soldier, New York; Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992. 243.

<sup>58</sup> Roth, David, Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 129.

<sup>59</sup> Atkinson, Rick; *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. 469.

<sup>60</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., *My American Journey*, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 157. 395.

<sup>61</sup> Speech by Gen Colin L. Powell as part of the Distinguished Lecture Program at NDU, 30 November 1990, Eisenhower Hall, Fort McNair, to Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and the National War College. Colin Powell Papers., NDU Library, Special Collections. 7

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<sup>63</sup> Powell, Colin L with Persico, Joseph E., *My American Journey*, New York: The Viking Press, 1995), 410.

<sup>64</sup> Means, Howard; *Colin Powell/Soldier Statesman, Statesman Soldier*, New York; Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992. 258.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.,295.

<sup>66</sup> Roth, David, *Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 209.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.,174.

<sup>68</sup> Jaffee, Lorna S, *The Development of the Base Force: 1989-1992*, Document prepared by the Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993, 54.

<sup>69</sup> Roth, David, *Sacred Honor, A Biography of Colin Powell*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 176-177.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.,313.

<sup>71</sup> Keller, Bill; NY Times.com; Article: *The World According to Colin Powell*, 25 November 2001. 10.

<sup>72</sup> Friel, Brian; *The Powell Leadership Doctrine*, Government Executive (Business Magazine, Volume 33, # 7) June 2001. 23.

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<sup>74</sup> Friel, Brian; *The Powell Leadership Doctrine*, Government Executive (Business Magazine, Volume 33, # 7) June 2001. 24.

<sup>75</sup> Mufson, Steven; Article: *Powell Could Find Himself at Odds with other Key Foreign-Policy Aides*, Seattle Times, 1 August 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Karon, Tony; Will America Still Love Colin Powell, Time.com; <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,94626,00html>. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Major General Richard A. Chilcoat, Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders, (Strategic Studies Institute, October 10, 1992) iv.

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